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SOME REVOLUTIONARY REMINISCENCES

BY NYM CRINKLE

With original illustrations by W. A. C. Pape.



“SHE GIVES A SIDE GLANCE AND LOOKS DOWN,
BEWARE! BEWARE!”

lady is in a box at the Metropolitan Opera House, or in her own conservatory, doesn't make much difference. You may mistake the place, but hardly the mood, for *he* has come in and she has seen him out of the corner of her eye.

I don't know whether that young patriot is rushing to Bennington or Bunker Hill with his dog. The artist informs me that it is to Trenton; but to me this is of little consequence. I should have written under the picture—“They will get there,” and that would have been enough. If you look at that picture you will understand that the country is aroused. There is a fine undertone of the whole county there—a general taking down of muskets, and hasty harnessing, with drums sounding in barns, and far-off cries and confusion. This is something like the sub-tones in a song, that carry you away

I HAVE often treated Pape's sketches like embers; sat dreamily looking into them and making pictures of my own. I think that quality of suggestiveness shows temperament. There is a sketch of a bit of worm-fence in Hamilton County, a mere memorandum, but it has a lot of memories twisted into it like the bitter-sweet, and is lit with old-time flames of sumach; and when I saw it I thought I smelled the rusty wild grape—is there any perfume so delicious?—and was sure a quail was calling on the other side.

Of course this is “association,” but it is a great art to summon associations without a roll-call, and feel sure that they will cluster around as the wild blackberry-vines clamber round that old fence.

Whether that

W. A. C. PAPE

12



AT CONCORD

while you are pinned down to the words.

In Revolutionary scenes Mr. Pape is always interesting, because he is himself interested. I think he must have had a grandfather who told him the traditions before they were stale. I remember hearing, when I was a boy, an old woman, ninety-four years of age, describing this very scene; and I don't think Pape was alive. All night, she said, she sat at her window and watched the tumult of the patriots tearing to the battle-fields in all kinds of vehicles with all kinds of animals, and in their excitement uttering all kinds of noises.

The best of these "continental"

pictures in action and life has a live, romantic, I had almost said theatric, pose as a composition. There is something eerie about one of the horsemen, and both of them appear to be in the air. I do not quite rest in the announcement that they are on their way to Trenton, and prefer to believe that they are coursing the wind, the genii of the times and the excitement, disdaining to touch the earth.

If there should come about in this country one of those revivals such as has recently seized upon Napoleon, and our people should become suddenly and newly

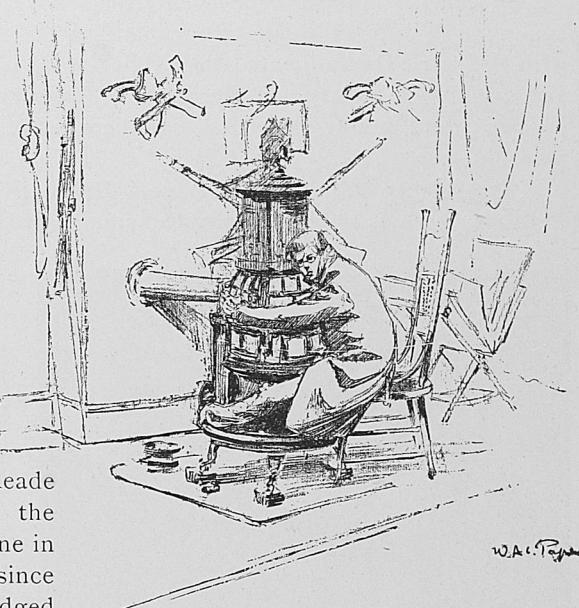


THE RUSH ON TRENTON (FRAGMENT)

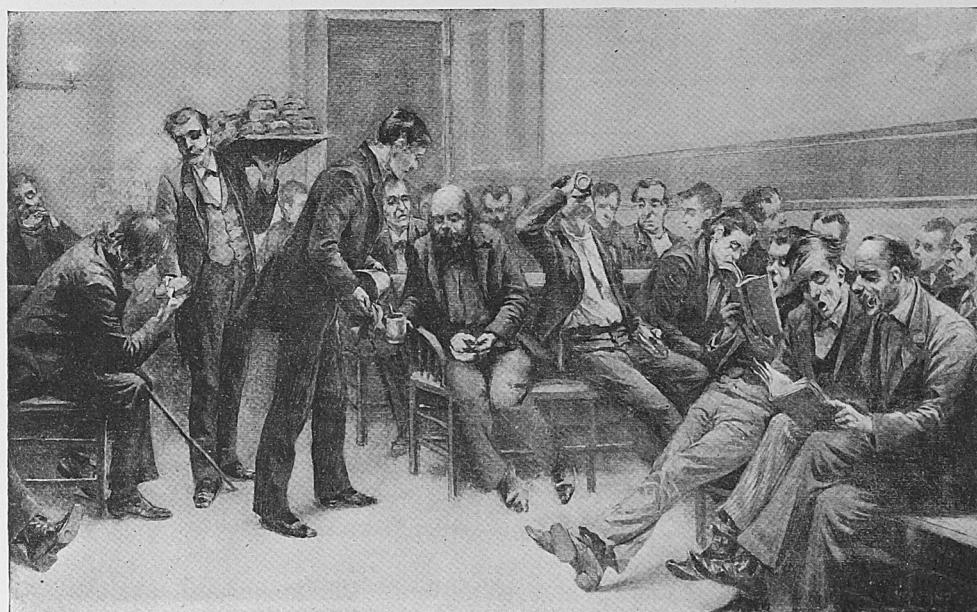
interested in Washington, I hope Pape will be with us, for I think he has that quality, rare in painters as well as in historians, which enables him to transport himself to the atmosphere of other times, and live there awhile ; touched on all sides by the conditions of those times.

Most of our clever workers in art and literature are so pressed upon by the present that they have no sensibility for the past. Where shall we find a story-teller who can catch the flavor of the middle ages as Charles Reade caught it in "The Cloister and the Hearth?" Certainly it is not done in "Romola" or "Hypatia," and since those books were written and judged of, nobody has cared to try it. The impatience, the eagerness, the competitions of our day, do not permit either our artists or our writers to sit down among the relics and reconstruct out of the storied dust the precious legends of the past.

I fancy Pape is the sort of man to see the unreaped and yellow harvest behind him, and not be lonesome with an old Queen Anne musket or a hard bed in one of Washington's headquarters.



ON DECEMBER 14, 1893



A MISSION IN WATER STREET

He can distinguish "one of Marion's boys" from one of old Put's boys. He has given us bits of Bennington and Concord that ought to be preserved along with the spirit that animated the originals. It is worth while to examine these bits and see if you can detect the flavor of Carolina in one and of New Hampshire in another ; and, better than that, can discern the spirit that took very little heed of State lines.

Pape selects subjects that have a perspective—I mean an historic perspective. At least there is a free romanticism in his treatment of those subjects that very



often disappears in his contemporaneous sketches. Therefore I think he is at his best when his imagination is not hampered by close facts. The two riders on the road to Trenton is like the flight of the Valkyries. The fidelity of the Mission in Water Street is like one of Zola's best descriptions. It has no dramatic unity. Its literalness, its balance, its variety, its accuracy, betokens the transcript of many observations, but do not evince the creative synthesis.

A composition really ought to tell what you feel, not what you saw. It is not a question of retinas, but of the sense of beauty in the soul ; for two men may view the same thing, but one will see it through an inner light that both interprets and adjusts it. For if History is the record of life Art

ought to be its interpretation, not its illustration ; and every artist properly equipped might well sing with Patmore :

"Thou primal love who grantest wings
And voices to the woodland birds,
Grant me the power of saying things
Too simple and too sweet for words."

Really that is what your true artist is always doing : and when he isn't doing it he is a reporter.

When Mr. Pape reported the scene at the Mission in Water Street he was entitled to a special place on the staff of the best daily. He was surprisingly graphic. He caught the boozy tramp in his relaxed moment, and he made the bread distributor an evangelist, as he probably was.

It is the popular notion just now that the more accurately these phases of extraneous and evanescent life are caught the better,—that it is the prime business

of the painter and the poet to go about—to see what is going on and tell us about it. It is this theory that recently led Mr. George Moore to declare that a pile of broken bottles with the sun shining on it is as worthy of the artistic efforts of an immortal soul as the sacrifice of Joan of Arc, provided you have an accurate eye.

But a truce to this. Pape is, to me, a romanticist, and probably doesn't know it. Let him not

be discouraged. Victor Hugo and Claude were sufferers from the same misfortune, and so was the Psalmist. Nothing would do but the hills must skip for joy.

Quote that to a realist and see him wince !

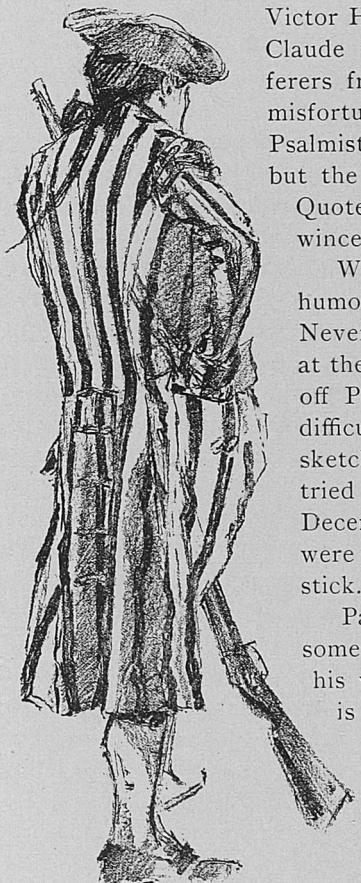
Whether Mr. Pape has any humor or not, I do not know. Never having borrowed his pipe at the Kit Kat, or been becalmed off Point no Point with him, it is difficult to say. In one of his sketches he has shown us how he tried to keep warm on a certain December day, when his fingers were too numb to hold the mahlstick.

Pape has a fine sensibility, and sometimes imparts it to his work, even when it is a mere impression.

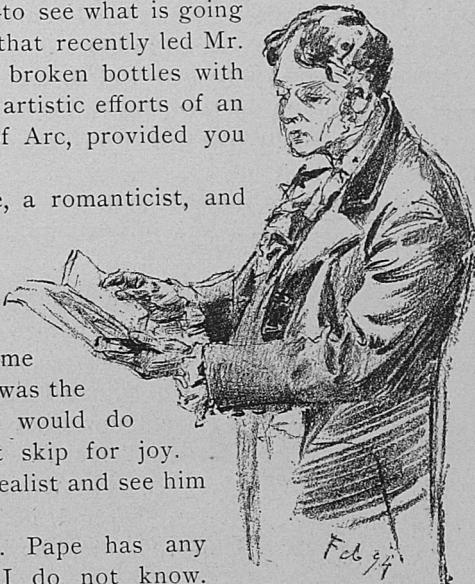
He saw more in Coquelin than any photograph has disclosed, and added it. Those of us who studied Coquelin recognized some charac-

teristics that obeyed Pape's pencil, and refused to yield to the camera. This delicate apprehension of shades of facial meaning, and of secrets that faces carry, but hate to give up, is the best gift. It makes the artist a seer. When he looks you in the face, you feel that he sees something you have tried to keep hid.

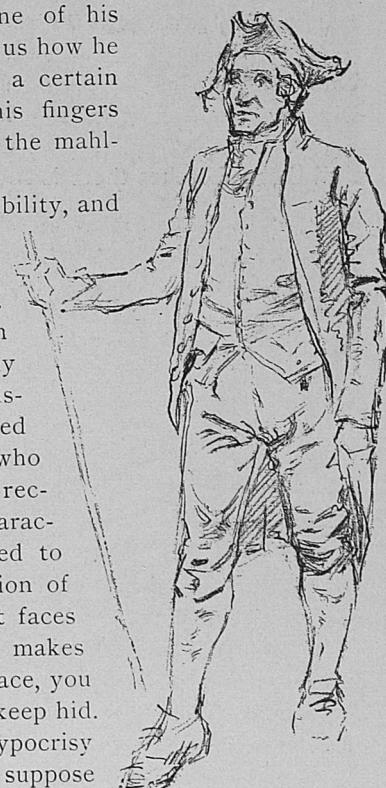
He had an inclination to go past the formal hypocrisy of behavior to the essentials of character. I suppose it is as unconscious a gift as the turning of a tendril to



AT LEXINGTON



A SKETCH



A CRONY

the light. And after all that is what art is after—to disclose to us what we have agreed to hide.

The Naiad at The Kit Kat is essentially classic. You may easily call these few lines Niobe or Ariadne or Autumn. Artists have a jolly free way of putting titles to sketches of the nude that are like the signatures to newspaper communications, "Junius" and "Veritas" managing to fit almost everything.



A PAINTING GIRL

But the type is there, call it what you please ; and, what is of more account, perhaps, nature asserts herself through the economy of lines, acceptably. Of course I do not pretend to know what "At The Kit Kat" means. It may mean something to Mr. Pape, and I dare say it does, but he hasn't managed to convey it. "At the Brink" would have the advantage of an idea and might stimulate the fancy. For myself I insist that the sylph is at the stream and sees her own reflection in it ; nothing else could induce that pensive mood.



AT THE KIT KAT

In all these sketches there is something caught of character. The merit of the



IN HAMILTON COUNTY



catching is in the surety and economy of the means employed. "A Painting Girl" is not a generalization; it is a particular individuality as indelibly traced as a signature on glass. It is the same with that bit of business pedestrianism under which Mr. Pape has written "In the Street"—a vacuity of phrase that doesn't at all fit the individuality of the personage. If I hadn't seen the man coming up Broadway after a bad fall in stocks, perhaps I should never have known how far he had got "into the street."

Take all the sketches together and they are free illustrations of Mr. Pape's skill—first in seeing the essential and then in catching it with the smallest expenditure of force. They are not legendary compositions that proclaim a rounded



HAVE YOU FOUND IT?

patriots had been defeated in battle, scattered by disaffection and desertion, decimated by starvation and disease. The Hudson, the Hackensack, and the Delaware had one by one been crossed in almost hopeless retreat. Then the calm, undaunted soul of Washington saw that the

turning-point had come, and backward the ragged but resolute Continentals flung their gaunt relic of an army upon the fattened Hessians and grenadiers of King George, and the first real step toward the independence of the United States had been taken. There is not only the heaven-called devotion of the "spirit of '76," typified by the great commander himself as he forces his horse to desperate speed, but it is also a picture of the deadly earnest, untiring *American* rush which has been a part of the nation ever since.



ONE OF MARION'S BOYS

story, but bits of passing life and momentarily flashed character, and viewed in that light become interesting as exhibits of the skill which can either portray the most evanescent denotements or translate the most elemental qualities.

I incline, however, to the Continental sketches as having an added element of imagination;

and of these my eye returns oftenest, and with the most lingering interest, to that headlong "rush" to Trenton displayed on page 339. Think again of the time and the story—how, through weary months the American



IN THE STREET

"A Crony" is very wide of particularization, but the sketch itself is the same Puritan face that is riding on the wind—a face in which the determination of a patriot and the simplicity of a yeoman are curiously commingled; and the whole spirit—the fighting spirit—of our forefathers is subtly and ruggedly hinted at in this exceedingly stirring fragment from the artist's laboratory.